

SPEAKER BARRETT: The committee amendments are adopted. To the bill, Senator Schmit, would you care to explain the bill?

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President and members, the Legislature, in 1987, approved LB 708 which authorized intrastate simulcasting. This was after an attempt, over many years, to convince the tracks and the horsemen that there was in fact a demand for such an event in the State of Nebraska. I well recall many years ago when we first proposed such an idea it was considered almost heresy to even debate it, and so it took a long time and it took a lot of effort for us to admit that perhaps that might be a logical extension of the thoroughbred racing industry. I'm convinced that the dire financial straits of the various tracks had no impact or no influence upon the change of view, it was just simply an idea whose time had come. But nonetheless we did authorize intrastate simulcasting. And during the first full year of simulcasting, in 1988, about one-third of the total amount wagered was from the simulcast effort. So it has been very successful for all segments of the horse racing industry. Because of the constitutional requirements, the Legislature could not authorize interstate simulcasting, and therefore Senator Vard Johnson sponsored a constitutional amendment, that was approved by the voters in 1988, that would allow us to bring out of state racing into Nebraska. In other words we can, by the passage of that amendment and the passage of this bill, then simulcast races such as the Kentucky Derby, Belmont Stakes, Preakness and other races that are of interest in Nebraska. Senator Rod Johnson mentioned the concern that was expressed relative to whether or not it might have an adverse impact upon the industry here in Nebraska. It has been expressed many times on this floor that thoroughbred racing is principally an agricultural pursuit. I don't have all of the statistics that have been quoted many times about the number of dollars that are invested in the thoroughbred horse racing industry in the State of Nebraska, in horses, in equipment, in the amount of oats they eat, in the number of bales of hay they consume, the amount of manure they produce which has a very beneficial effect upon the crop production in the State of Nebraska, but it's all down in the statistics, and I'm sure that there are those in the Rotunda out there who can give it to you, if you want it. You know in some ways the Legislature is a little bit like the thoroughbred industry, you've got the stables down here where our offices are located, you've got the trainers out there in the Rotunda, and then we are the thoroughbreds here. And as it usually happens on this floor as you come into the body you start out as kind of